In January 2014, the parliament voted unanimously to amend Article 475 of the penal code, which stated that a rapist could escape prosecution if he married his underage victim. Barring marriage, Article 475 mandates a prison term of one to five years for the convicted rapist. The amendment maintains the prison terms but removes the possibility of exoneration. Controversy over the exoneration clause had raged since 2012, when 16-year old Amina Filali committed suicide after she was forced to marry her rapist. Human rights and women's rights activists lauded the amendment, but called for further reform to criminalize violence against women and raise penalties.

The February 20 Movement, which led prodemocracy protests beginning in 2011, seems to have been attenuated, primarily through government harassment and incarceration of its loose coalition of members. Yet civil protests—sit-ins, demonstrations, and marches—remained common in 2014.

The government expressed ongoing concern during the year about Moroccans fighting in Syria and Iraq who might return to the country to launch attacks. There were also concerns that Libyan arms may fall into the hands of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). In July, the Interior Ministry announced that it was tightening security, and the government put the military services on a state of high alert. In August and September, Spanish and Moroccan authorities made arrests in the Spanish enclave cities of Ceuta and Melilla, as well as Melilla's neighboring Moroccan town of Nador; officials said the suspects were terrorists recruiting jihadists to fight for the Islamic State (IS) militant group.

In October, the government called for the postponement of the upcoming Africa Cup of Nations, which it had been scheduled to host, citing fears of the spread of the Ebola virus. When the Confederation of African Football declined to postpone the games, Morocco refused to host the tournament. Morocco's decision was sharply criticized and has posed a profound challenge to the country's diplomatic efforts in sub-Saharan Africa.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 15 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 5 / 12

King Mohammed VI and his close advisers, often referred to as the *Makhzen,* hold political, social, and economic power in Morocco. The 2011 constitutional referendum was the latest in a series of constitutional reforms the palace has engineered since the first constitution in 1962. Nevertheless, the reform was significant. While it preserved the monarch's existing powers, it required him to appoint the prime minister from the party that wins the most seats in parliamentary elections, and to consult the prime minister before dissolving parliament. Other provisions included giving official status to the Tamazight (Berber) language, calling for gender equality, and emphasizing respect for human rights.

Even under the 2011 constitution, the monarch can dissolve Parliament, rule by decree, and dismiss or appoint cabinet members. He sets national and foreign policy, commands the armed forces and intelligence services, and presides over the judicial system. One of the king's constitutional titles is "commander of the faithful," giving his authority a claim to religious legitimacy.

The lower house of Parliament, the Chamber of Representatives, has 395 directly elected members who

serve for five-year terms. Of these, 60 seats are reserved for women, and 30 for men under age 40. Members of the 270-seat upper house, the Chamber of Counselors, are chosen by an electoral college to serve nine-year terms. Under a rule that took effect in 2009, women are guaranteed 12 percent of the seats in local elections.

Parliamentary elections held in November 2011 resulted in a victory for the Justice and Development Party (PJD) of Prime Minister Abdelilah Benkirane. The PJD formed a coalition with the Istiqlal, the Popular Movement, and the Party of Progress and Socialism (PPS) in January 2012. The government held office until July 2013, when the Istiqlal withdrew in protest of the PJD's handling of the economy. A new government took office in October 2013, with the National Rally of Independents (RNI), previously part of the opposition, joining the coalition.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 7 / 16

Morocco exhibits a multiparty system. However, the parties are fragmented and generally unable to assert themselves. The PJD, which won the 2011 parliamentary vote, had long been a vocal opposition Islamist party, even as it remained respectful of the monarchy. The Islamist Justice and Charity Movement, by contrast, is illegal, and therefore cannot participate in the electoral process, though it is tolerated by the authorities. Other Islamist groups face official harassment and are not permitted to participate in the political process. Parties emerge and disappear periodically, depending on reformation and fractures, as well as individual politicians' careerist maneuvers.

For decades, Rif, Tamazight, and Chleuh peoples—grouped together under the term Berber—had an uneasy relationship to the Makhzen. Prominent Berber elites enjoyed access to the monarchy and also had their interests represented in the parliament by so-called Berber parties, but the bulk of the ethnically indigenous population was marginalized. A legacy of complicated ethnic and identity politics persists.

C. Functioning of Government: 3 / 12

Elected officials are duly installed in government, although their power to shape policy is sharply constrained, as the king and his advisers control most of the levers of power.

Despite the government's rhetoric on combating widespread corruption, it remains a problem, both in public life and in the business world. Morocco was ranked 80 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index. Corruption is rife throughout the economy. For example, Morocco's Central Authority for the Prevention of Corruption found that 30 percent of Moroccans had to pay a bribe to access medical and health services. Abdelaziz Adnane, head of the National Fund for Social Welfare Organizations, has been lauded for efforts to fight corruption in health care.

In the 2011 elections, the PJD ran on an anticorruption platform, though it has found it challenging to root out graft. One of the deepest structural impediments to reducing corruption is the king's own role in the economy; the king is the majority stakeholder in a vast array of private and public sector firms. According to *Forbes*, Mohammed VI's net worth in 2014 was estimated to be $2.1 billion, making him one of the wealthiest people in Africa.

Civil Liberties: 27 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 8 / 16

Although the independent press enjoys a significant degree of freedom when reporting on economic and social policies, the authorities use restrictive press laws and an array of financial and other, more subtle mechanisms to punish critical journalists, particularly those who focus on the king, his family, the status of Western Sahara, or Islam. The monarchy has instructed businesses not to buy ads in publications that have criticized the government.

The state dominates the broadcast media, but people have access to foreign satellite television channels. The authorities occasionally disrupt websites and internet platforms, while bloggers and other internet users are sometimes arrested for posting content that offends the monarchy.

Journalists are also subject to harassment. Mahmoud Lhaisan, a television journalist, was arrested in July 2014 following his reporting on police abuse amid the forced dispersal of Sahrawi demonstrators who had begun to call for independence during a rally after Algeria's loss in the World Cup.

In July, popular singer Mouad Belghouat, who raps under the name El Haqed ("The Enraged"), was sentenced to four months in prison and fined $1,200. It was the third time he had been arrested since 2011. His 2011 song, "Stop the Silence," was a popular part of the February 20 Movement. In December, Morocco's Cinema Commission, part of the Ministry of Communications, banned the Hollywood film *Exodus* from theaters, citing Islam's prohibition on the depiction of God. Some members of the government criticized the ban, as did Morocco's vibrant association of filmmakers.

In October 2014 an anonymous hacker released a steady stream of confidential diplomatic cables on Twitter. The cables purportedly came from the General Directorate of Studies and Documentation (DGED), the powerful external intelligence agency. The leak roiled the capital until the end of the year. Hundreds of purportedly incriminating documents portrayed the Makhzen as bribing foreign journalists and diplomats to support Morocco's position on Western Sahara and to reveal tensions between Rabat and the UN Secretary-General's special envoy for the Western Sahara, Christopher Ross. While some of the documents include incriminating evidence, the lack of certainty about the identity and agenda of the leaker—and the apparent manipulation of some of the documents—raised questions about their veracity. Government officials have largely remained silent in response, although Foreign Minister Salaheddine Mezouar testified before the Parliament on December 11 that it was a campaign orchestrated by Algerian intelligence officials.

Nearly all Moroccans are Muslims. While the small Jewish community is permitted to practice its faith without government interference, Moroccan authorities are growing increasingly intolerant of social and religious diversity, as reflected in arrest campaigns against Shiites, Muslim converts to Christianity, and those opposed to a law enforcing the Ramadan fast.

While university campuses generally provide a space for open discussion, professors practice self-censorship when dealing with sensitive topics like Western Sahara, the monarchy, and Islam.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 6 / 12

Freedom of assembly is not always respected, though frequent demonstrations by unemployed graduates

and unions are generally tolerated. Although such protests often occur without incident, activists say they are harassed outside of public events. The February 20 Movement was cited as illegal by a Casablanca judge in 2012.

Civil society and independent nongovernmental organizations are quite active, but the authorities monitor Islamist groups, arrest suspected extremists, and harass other groups that offend the government. Moroccan workers are permitted to form and join independent trade unions, and the 2004 labor law prevents employers from punishing workers who do so. However, the authorities have forcibly broken up labor actions that involve criticism of the government.

F. Rule of Law: 6 / 16

The judiciary is not independent of the palace, and the courts are regularly used to punish government opponents. Arbitrary arrest and torture still occur. The security forces are less supervised with detainees advocating independence for Western Sahara, leading to frequent reports of abuse and lack of due process. Police brutality and torture often go uninvestigated.

The government has continued to accept aid from the European Union to stop migrants at the northern border with Ceuta and Melilla, as well as to thwart passage across the Strait of Gibraltar and the passage to the Canary Islands. Efforts by migrants to storm the fences in Ceuta and Melilla continue apace. Human rights abuses are extensive against the transient population, and the European Union turns a blind eye to Moroccan officials' abuses.

The Moroccan LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community faces harsh discrimination. Homosexuality is illegal, though it is generally tolerated in tourist areas. However, in September 2014, authorities arrested and jailed a 69-year old British tourist, Ray Cole, and his Moroccan partner, Jamal Wald Nass, in Marrakech. They were found guilty of "homosexual acts" and sentenced to four months in prison. Cole was released suddenly in October on health grounds, and Nass was released pending appeal.

Arab culture dominates in Morocco. The government has made some efforts to rectify past practice of Arabizing school curricula and society, though inequalities persist. The 2011 constitutional reforms made Berber an official language, and the Amazigh language and culture have been promoted in schools.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 7 / 16

Freedom of movement, employment, and education are guaranteed in Morocco, but poor economic conditions and corruption limit these freedoms in practice. Widespread bribery, nepotism, and misconduct within the educational sector constrain merit-based advancement.

Morocco ranked 71 out of 189 countries in the World Bank's 2015 *Doing Business* report and 89 out of 178 countries on the 2015 *Index of Economic Freedom*, indicating a mixed legal environment for the smooth operation of enterprise. Although starting a business is a relatively quick and simple process, regulatory and market hurdles create difficulties.

The majority of residents are employed as laborers, almost half in the agricultural sector. Nearly 50 percent of Morocco's land is held collectively by tribes, which allocate its use based on the needs of the community, while smallholders and a few larger agricultural outfits hold almost one-third. Most agricultural land is

administered according to religious and customary law, which generally respects the ownership and use rights of its residents and laborers.

Women continue to face significant discrimination at the societal level. However, Moroccan authorities have a relatively progressive view on gender equality, which is recognized in the 2011 constitution. The 2004 family code has been lauded for granting women increased rights in the areas of marriage, divorce, and child custody, and various other laws aim to protect women's interests. While some of the most egregious elements of Article 475 of the penal code, which had previously allowed for the exoneration of rapists who married their victims, were dismantled in January 2014, advocates still press for deeper reform of the legal code.

Child laborers, especially girls working as domestic helpers, are denied basic rights. In October, Parliament debated legislation concerning rural girls trafficked to cities by middlemen. Local NGOs are urging the establishment of a minimum working age of 18.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

Full Methodology

The numerical ratings and status listed above do not reflect conditions in Western Sahara, which is examined in a separate report.